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ABSTRACT

Professional discourse among educators often includes the use of "slogans" and "generalizations." Generalizations are usually more precise than slogans, which can be interpreted differently and to various degrees. During the implementation of open education curricula in several elementary schools, the evolution of teachers' ideas on classroom techniques was examined. Komisar and McClellan's slogan system analysis was used to delineate two groups of teachers with different interpretations of open education. The two groups of teachers interpreted the same slogans in different ways, depending on whether they were affiliated with a parent-teacher coalition, the Open Classroom Committee (OCC), formed to support open education. A high level of ambiguity existed in the interpretation of slogans and in the development of open education curricula because the differences between the two groups were never openly articulated, and the teachers themselves were often not aware of the differences in perspectives about open education. The differences were largely apparent in the conception and organization of the curriculum. The OCC-affiliated teachers were pragmatic, functioned informally, and based their curriculum development and rules for student behavior on the collective experience of the class. Those teachers not affiliated with the OCC often used individualized lesson plans and performance contracts and were more likely to have structured classroom projects. The use and study of slogans in educational discourse can lead to improved communications for educational practice. (FG)

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The Value of Slogans in Professional Discourse: A Case Study of the Entry of New Ideas into Educational Practice

Margaret M. Holmes

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Abstract

Drawing on data from a case study of the implementation of open education in a midwestern city, the paper examines the evolution of ideas as teachers put them into practice in a school setting. The research is focused at the level of professional discourse among teachers. Using Komisar and McClellan's slogan system analysis, the paper delineates two identifiably different interpretations of open education which emerged from the field setting. It is suggested that research on practice in education should make greater use of the analysis of slogans which, by definition, summarize practice and diminish the search for generalizations which do not allow adequate conceptualization of educational practice.

The Value of Slogans in Professional Discourse: A Case Study of the Entry of New Ideas Into Educational Practice

Margaret M. Holmes

Curriculum is a practical field. "Development" in curriculum is really a series of proposals for action and activity. The sources of the proposals and the arenas in which educational discourse takes place are multiple: universities, federal agencies, news media, schools, neighborhood gatherings, etc. All those who engage in debate about curriculum would, of course, like to have an impact on classrooms. However, it is teachers who are in the position to enter the classroom with new ideas. There is a growing recognition that research and development in education are meaningful only when teachers put curricular proposals to work. It is critical to understand how ideas get to teachers and how teachers get to ideas. The analysis of educational discourse is critical to an understanding of the transformation and development of ideas in all educational settings. Of particular importance are settings where practicing teachers turn proposals into concrete action.

To understand educational discourse and the use of language in curricular activity, we must understand the basic form of curricular proposals--what Komisar and McClellan have called slogans and slogan systems.[1] They point out that discourse in curriculum cannot logically involve generalizations, but rather is built around what they call slogans. The use of the term slogan here is not to denigrate curriculum but to point to the function of curricular assertions: they summarize practice but are not generalizable in the sense of necessarily

implying particulars which can be extrapolated deductively from the assertion. The importance of the distinction is that we talk and think as if educational slogans were generalizations when they are not.

I will develop the distinction and illustrate its importance in clarifying the nature of educational discourse by using data from a case study of practical curriculum development among open classroom teachers in elementary schools in a midwestern city in the mid-1970s.

The central problem of curriculum is generally accepted to be "What should be taught, studied and learned?" Sometimes included is the matter of how we verify that what was intended has been taught, studied and learned. These are the practical concerns of an eminently practical field. Part of the trouble with research in curriculum is that the object of study is human praxis. We are studying, in part, the ways teachers shape and give meaning to a part of their world. This is not to imply that teachers are either entirely rational or entirely in control of their endeavor. But it is to point to a central dynamic of the field: it is the study of human activity. It is not easy to provide the analytic distance that research should give to problems and at the same time to keep the actors at the center of the endeavor. I would like to suggest that the notion suggested by Komisar and McClellan of curriculum as slogan systems provides such an analytic framework.

Generalizations vs. Slogans

Komisar and McClellan make two distinctions, each of which is important: the first is between generalizations and slogans, the second between ceremonial and non-ceremonial use of slogans.

Generalizations and slogans are similar in that they summarize other assertions not given in the summarizing assertion. But the kinds of assertions summarized are different, and what can logically be extrapolated from the assertions differs. Generalizations imply their particulars with a precision not possible for slogans, though the semantic forms of slogans and generalizations are similar. A generalization, such as "all certified teachers are college graduates" means that certified teacher A, certified teacher B, etc., are college graduates. The slogan, "all students now receive a basic education in elementary school mathematics", may mean that in fourth grade A, 25 percent of arithmetic problems are multiplication, in fourth grade B, 40 percent of arithmetic problems are multiplication, etc. This is not to say that the slogan has no particular meaning unless it is being used only ceremonially. It probably does mean that there is little set theory in fourth grade arithmetic and probably little geometry. But we do not know what the particulars are from the slogan unless we know what the standard interpretation of the slogan is in the arena in which it is used. Slogans are systematically ambiguous until there is some arbitrary or customary delimitation of meaning.

Another characteristic of slogans is that while they often look descriptive, they are usually also prescriptive. A statement in a journal article may say, "Students' time on task was increased 50 percent when children chose their own work." Such a statement implicitly instructs the reader to facilitate student choice if time on task is a desired aim. A generalization, on the other hand, unless explicitly prescriptive, is only descriptive.

Slogans, when made into complete sentences, often resemble generalizations. We often treat slogans as if, like generalizations, they implied their particulars. Hence, it is common to formulate statements of aims or goals and then draw implications for a particular situation. If slogan-like statements were identical with generalizations, and if it were possible to formulate true statements of ends, then this common procedure would be a good operating procedure. Unfortunately, slogans do not imply their particulars. Slogans simply become attached to a more or less clearly specified group of proposals together with definitions and empirical evidence used as arguments for the proposals. (This is the activity known as educational philosophy.) Given this difference, it follows that finding out the particulars summarized by a slogan is not a matter of extrapolation, but a matter of finding out their interpretation.

This points us back to the people who talk, write or teach under the aegis of the slogan. It also directs our attention to the possibility of competing interpretations and the possibility of internal struggles for squatters' rights on slogans which may legitimize a particular set of practices.

If we are to understand and participate in curricular discourse to establish ways to engage in meaningful dialogue about curricular and pedagogical programs, it is important to understand that the standards of truth relevant to generalizations do not apply. We are talking about summary assertions which summarize particular practices, some of which may be essential to one person, unimportant to another, and an interference to a third. In such a situation, it becomes critical whose practices become attached to any slogan having the power of legitimacy in a particular context.

Before examining open education as a slogan, let us turn briefly to the distinction between ceremonial and non-ceremonial use of slogans. Ceremonial use of slogans occurs when the speaker or writer wishes to produce an emotional response but imply nothing in particular. The slogan in this case is meaningless. If the speaker is capitalizing on someone else's non-ceremonial use of a slogan, he or she can trivialize it by using the slogan to mean something else or nothing. However, if the speaker in that case is asked for particulars, he may discover that the "buzz words" had meaning after all. Whether one is in a position to trivialize a slogan is usually either a matter of power or of wit. If one is applying to the National Institute of Education for a grant, one had best not treat the notion of "equity" as a buzz word or use it ceremonially. In that situation, NIE is in a position to 1) define equity and 2) require that the applicant offer evidence that he or she is prepared to act on the imperative of the NIE interpretation.

If, on the other hand, one is a superintendent of schools, one is not compelled (due to relative power) to make "open education" mean what a small group of teachers takes it to mean. At the same time, if one is a clever teacher, one can offer evidence (like test scores) to show that one is "teaching basics", but not follow the majority practices meant by "teaching basics". These examples are given to indicate that applying the analysis of slogans to educational discourse need not distract us from issues of power and issues of whose interests are served. Rather, the slogan analysis can add clarity both to what is being proposed and to how curricular language is used in practice.

The slogan system analysis points us to the particular proposals and the interpretations used by curricular spokespersons if we are to use language non-ceremonially and constructively. This should help avoid what Schwab calls the "vice of abstraction".[2] While the most straightforward mode of communicating an interpretation of a slogan is to list examples of intended proposals, another way is to affiliate publicly with a well-known school program. Often the form and cadence of the language reflects in some fashion the nature of the slogan.

To illustrate where the analysis of slogans may lead and the kind of issues it may raise, I will draw on data from a participant observation case study of a grass-roots attempt to institute open classrooms in a public school system. If we are to recognize that the interpretation of pedagogical slogans is artibrary, then we must seriously address the question, "What does it mean, in this time, in this place, to these people?"

The point of such an exercise is not to ultimately replicate the activity somewhere else. Human activity and the complexity of social settings do not lend themselves to duplication. We can, however, gain insight into a coherent curricular proposal or educational philosophy. If the interpreted slogan gives direction to other people's activity, they can extend the interpretation in compatible ways in different settings. A viable slogan, sufficiently interpreted, has the power to breed compatible activity. The ultimate test of whether a particular activity would fit John Dewey's philosophical scheme is, "Would John Dewey have liked it?"

Open education, left as an uninterpreted slogan, means nothing except "not closed education". However, for some teachers and liberal

curricularists, it summarized a serious and coherent set of proposals in the mid-1970s, some of which, I suspect, have entered the realm of the commonplace, both in talk about curriculum and in practice in some elementary school classrooms. Whether there is or ever was a standard or commonly accepted interpretation is unclear. In the setting reported here, there were clearly two interpretations competing in subtle ways for the status of standard interpretation. It is perhaps evidence of elementary teachers' autonomy that neither group had to accept the other's definition. The matter was tacitly settled by teachers voting with their feet. They simply spent time with other teachers who did open education the same way.

The setting of the study was a medium-sized midwestern city with a large university. Interest in open education was confined to a grass-roots movement among elementary school teachers and parents of elementary school children. The open education movement was grass roots in that it had no institutional sponsorship. The school system had no coherent educational philosophy, but judged all school curricular decisions solely on cost-accounting criteria.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, parents and teachers independently began to read and talk about progressive infant schools in England and about American open classrooms. They read reports by Lillian Weber, Vincent Rogers and others. They formed a loose parent-teacher coalition, the Open Classroom Committee, and launched a public information campaign to "educate" other teachers, parents, administrators and school board members about the merits of open education. A participant observer, I was a parent member of the committee and functioned as a liason between the committee, school board and administration. As I

was not teaching elementary school at the time, I was an outsider in terms of day-to-day teaching activity, but accepted as a sympathetic colleague.

As the study progressed, it became clear that among the teachers in the elementary schools, there were two groups of open classroom teachers. They used the same slogans in ways identifiably different to the researcher who had access to detailed interviews and participant observation data, but which were not obvious to even an interested casual observer. These will be discussed later. Differences in perspective generally followed the lines of affiliation or disaffiliation with the Open Classroom Committee. The Open Classroom Committee (OCC) teachers shared a perspective on open education which was specified by sharing "good ideas" within the group. The open classroom teachers not affiliated with the OCC (NA teachers) shared a different notion. Both groups, NA and OCC teachers, taught in-service courses, though most such courses were taught by OCC teachers.

The Open Classroom Committee, through the public information campaign, began to give local, though quite general, meaning to the term open education. They affiliated with particular, well-known educators. They brought Edward Yoemans, Vincent Rogers and others to talk to school people. They showed films of children busy at independent projects, with the teacher helping with the projects rather than lecturing. The local teachers began talking with each other and trying projects in their own classrooms. They began to take desks out of their classrooms and bring in tables, sofas, orange crates, aquariums, cooking pots, electric skillets. The school "public" began to get excited--some positively, some negatively. Some parents liked

what they saw and began to petition the school board for more open classrooms. Some principals, fire inspectors and teachers who like peace, quiet and orderliness didn't like what they saw. To exaggerate only slightly, open education came to represent busyness, noise, individual projects and old furniture. But there remained considerable ambiguity. If one asked, "What do I do to be an open classroom teacher?", or "What should the children learn by being open classroom students?", or even, ignoring outcomes, "What may children do and not do in an open classroom?", the answer could be infinitely varied. Clearly, at this point, it became critical to the character of open education whose practice became summarized by the slogan.

The question of how this was settled in the school community was a matter of subtle and not-so-subtle maneuvering by both groups of teachers. But most of the teachers' time was spent in the classroom teaching children. Whatever maneuvering was done was important to them because it had implications for their identity as teachers. There was, in their eyes, the opportunity for their major professional preoccupation to be maligned, misunderstood or praised. I would argue that any set of curricular proposals which gains enough following to enter public parlance or has the power to attract followers and proponents goes through such a process of definition, interpretation and lining up of advocates. The nature of the struggle is different in different social settings. In a university, the stakes may be the ability to get tenure, grant money or a departmental chair through becoming identified as the personification of a major development in the field.

In this case, at the public school level, the stakes for the open classroom teachers were control of textbook selection, use of petty

cash and enough legitimacy to withstand challenges by other teachers and some parents. The term "creative teaching" was important to both groups. It had already acquired local meaning and was equivalent to professional excellence there in the 1970s. For the administration, the issues were administrative prerogatives: control of curriculum, resources and physical placement of programs in schools.

This is not to indicate that the issues were "just political", though that was the opinion of some, and it was meant pejoratively. The slogan was manipulated in the arena of local school politics. For teachers, however, there was impact at the classroom level. Being an open classroom teacher gave legitimacy for certain activities.

While I will describe later two quite different perspectives about the nature of open education pedagogically, these were never explicitly articulated, either inside or outside the open classroom movement. There is evidence that teachers felt strongly about who was a "real" open classroom teacher, meaning who shared the Open Classroom Committee (OCC) definition. But even this tacit recognition of differences in perspectives was only spoken of quietly among friends. It served the interest of building a movement to maintain a high level of ambiguity. The tighter the definition, the more people were likely to be excluded and the less broad the base of support. The way the OCC teachers referred to other teachers who were affiliated with the open classroom movement, but construed it differently, was to apply a developmental metaphor. Other teachers were "coming along" or "moving toward" open education. As I will indicate later, their perspectives were not really compatible with the OCC version of open education. In this case, as is often true, a statement of sympathy or intent to participate constituted becoming a member of the movement.

While my analysis revealed the differences in perspective, these were not available to the participants. For the most part, teachers applied the rules of affiliation without ever articulating the distinctions they used to guide behavior. For that reason, the casual observer was usually left with the assumption that there was a standard interpretation of open education and that it was shared by the forty or more teachers who called themselves open classroom teachers. Occasionally, some outsider stumbled upon the differences in perspective, but for the most part, no one demanded the specificity which would have revealed differences. Several examples of occasions where differences surfaced will illustrate the problems casual observers encountered.

On one occasion, a school public relations staff member published a list of open classroom teachers drawn from each geographic quadrant of the city. The accompanying article was generally descriptive of busy, happy children enjoying school in open classrooms. The article suggested that the teachers would welcome visitors who wanted to find out about open education. The school grapevine soon reported that there were "rumblings" from a school on the west side. Shortly, a furious teacher called to say she never wished to be on a list with those Open Classroom Committee teachers.

On a different occasion, two OCC teachers who taught at the same school gave a talk to a Parent-Teacher Association group about open education. They referred to each other and to other OCC teachers in other buildings when they spoke of open classroom teachers. During the question period, a parent said, "You mean my child is not in an open classroom?" The child's teacher turned around from several rows ahead of the speaker and said, "That's right! I've told you,

just because I have a sofa and a rug does not mean I'm an open classroom teacher!"

Another time a local television crew filmed a show on "alternatives in education", featuring a local open classroom. Unfortunately, an OCC teacher's classroom was filmed, but an NA teacher narrated the tape. The result infuriated the OCC teacher. "What does she mean, 'We plan a separate lesson for each child'? What does she think this is, IGE?"

Differences in Interpretation

What were the differences in perspective to which the teachers made oblique references? As indicated above, the teachers acted largely on tacit knowledge of who was doing things they were comfortable with. On a practical basis, it was easy just to spend time with those people engaged in a similar enterprise. However, since the rules of differentiation were tacit, it was difficult for an outsider, even a parent who wanted open education for her child, to judge what he or she was electing when requesting an open classroom.

The differences revolved around what the teachers wanted children to get out of their activity. They structured the activities with a different set of utilities in mind. The differences, then, were largely differences in organization of curriculum. Superficially, and particularly visually, the classrooms would have looked quite similar. All the open classroom teachers decentralized instruction so that an observer looking in a door would see clusters of children working on projects. All of them promoted a sense that school should be fun as well as educative. All of them established informal, friendly relation-

ships with their students. Often, they did similar things: they cooked in the classroom; they kept hamsters and other small animals; they organized nature walks; they allowed "educational games" which allowed children to play at arithmetic, etc. Even their standards for selecting curricular material shared the broad outlines of the school-wide minimum objectives. All the teachers knew the objectives for their grade levels and incorporated those broadly into their curricular plans.

The differences in curricular perspective will be described here as a series of descriptive subslogans which specify the interpretations. The descriptive notions reported as subslogans summarize extensive observation and interview data which cannot be included for lack of space.[3] To demonstrate use of such slogans in delineating the essential coherence of interpreted educational slogans, some isolated data will be included at the end which the reader should immediately be able to assign to the OCC and NA teachers respectively.

The major subslogans which describe the perspectives or organizing principles used by the Open Classroom Committee-affiliated teachers and the Non-affiliated teachers are 1) curriculum as making connections (the OCC perspective) and 2) curriculum as human relations (the NA perspective). It may be noted that human relations is itself a broadly used slogan. It is used for two reasons. The first is that the NA teachers generally focused on "relating" to children as a primary focus. The second is that human relations is a term which the NA teachers were likely to use. It represents a way of talking about human interaction in institutional settings which was standard usage with a large number of school people in that city. I use it in part to indicate that the language of the NA teachers indicated their affiliation with the broader professional perspective of schooling.

Curriculum as Making Connections

Basically, the "connectors" saw their mission as introducing children to new worlds of experience. Their major task as teachers was to introduce the children to new conceptual worlds and to the actual worlds in which persons and communities of persons function. To introduce the children, however, did not mean simply to show a film or present a reconstructed picture from a textbook. Rather the teacher had to engage the children with activities which were essential to, say, the world of pottery or mime or being a naturalist or cooking. If possible, a person who represented the world from which the activity was abstracted would come to the classroom. If not, the teacher filled in by producing a representative activity. It was hoped that the children would begin to pick up the notion of exploring different worlds or different ways of looking at the world themselves. In that case, the children would begin to make their own connections with the ways of looking and being which are possible in the world. The idea of making connections is a global idea and did not carry with it priorities about whose worlds should be explored or what order of activity or idea was appropriate for study. As far as these teachers were concerned, the possibilities were limitless. However, the teachers were politically realistic enough to make any curriculum required by the school a priority in the classroom. These required items they "worked in" to the curriculum as unobtrusively as possible, leaving major topics open to chance and the imaginations of children and teachers.

Personalization

Incorporating the children's experience and imaginations in curriculum planning and execution was essential. The notion of "building on children's interests" was the usual way of talking about this mandate. For the OCC teachers it was critical not just that the children be "interested" in school, but that the children's developing interests become the basis of curriculum selection.

The rationale for this approach revolved around a notion of personalization. The message appeared to be that knowledge is of no value unless connected to persons. The "connections" to be made were with ideas in context and knowledge in use. The teachers contended that if they pursued children's interests and engaged them as authors of their own projects, then teaching became a pleasure because the children would begin to "take off" on their own.

Teaching Children to Think

While much of the excitement the OCC teachers shared came from the sense of involvement with projects of personal importance to the children, there was a further rationale for their emphasis on working from children's interests. There appeared to be a generalized pattern they hoped the children would begin to adopt of thinking through ideas, planning concrete activity, carrying it out and sharing results with the class.

The practical problem for teaching the children to think through and execute projects was how to engage the children in study--how to help the child make the connection with his or her own interests. The teachers developed a repertoire of techniques which helped them to

get the children to implement their ideas and make a commitment to how they were going to do a project. The techniques for getting children started on projects were the open classroom "tricks of the trade", those practical strategies which teachers shared with each other in informal gatherings.

The Importance of Community

The momentum for doing projects was generated in part by the teacher's talking through plans with students and getting a commitment for action. But the momentum for carrying them out did not rest just with an agreement between the teacher and the child, but was diffused throughout the social milieu. The establishment of a sense of community and the development of peer standards and expectations decentralized the pedagogical initiative. The teacher could leave the children the responsibility to fill up their own time with work because the norm of the classroom was that students were busy on their own or were free to join others' projects if all parties agreed.

Whole-class projects often functioned to build the sense of community. The activities often had the flavor of an American barn raising. Everyone was expected to pitch in on the community work and then go back to their individual tasks. Indeed, many of the group activities were not far removed from the common activities of a midwest farm community in the first half of this century: cooking, celebration of the birth of a guinea pig, impromptu drama productions, folk singing.

Direct Contact with Life

It is clear that the "connectors" had a vision of engaging children

directly with life. The projects and interests of the children were taken seriously as engaging their real interests. As the teachers augmented these studies and introduced areas of their own, they hoped to engage not with books "about" a topic, but with people who made their living at the activity. They wanted classroom work to be drawn from "reality".

Pragmatism

Their objection to pre-packaged curricula stemmed in part from the fact that it appeared to the OCC teachers as not "real" enough. But they also operated from a strongly pragmatic sense that a published curriculum was too expensive, too fancy and that the same things could be taught in an ad hoc fashion. A strong sense of Yankee ingenuity led them to collect a lot of "junk" materials that might be useful some day in doing projects.

Negotiation

The pedagogical style of the OCC teachers encouraged a lot of give and take among students and teachers. The word "negotiation" here is descriptive of the style of interaction, but it does not, as in labor negotiation, denote two equal parties, or two potentially equal parties. The children in a classroom are always aware that ultimately the teacher has more authority and can call off the negotiation. The teachers felt no contradiction between the difference in role status and their encouraging children to negotiate academic requirements and classroom routines. They did not see their pedagogical style as giving children a false feeling of autonomy within an autocratic regime. Rather, they recognized their jobs as teachers

to be giving children responsibility and autonomy gradually, hoping all along that the children would be as autonomous as possible given the minimal social restraints necessary to avoid anarchy. The teachers basically assumed that, whatever the issue, it could be worked out. They set down very broad guidelines like "respect each other" and "you can do as you like as long as you don't interfere with other children's work". Then, within that broad framework, they expected children to negotiate the specifics with each other and the teacher.

The effect was that over the course of a school year, a body of precedent was gradually built up, based on incidents in the classroom which all the class members understood. The teachers preferred to wait for incidents to arise in this way rather than to lay down a set of particular rules in the beginning of the year. This negotiating style of dealing with situations as they arose, and anticipating them only in very general ways, is consistent with the teachers' insistence that everything depended on the context in which it arose.

Academic assignments were given to children, but were assumed to be open to change if a child came up with a "better" idea or could justify some other course of action.

Summary

In general, the OCC teachers relied heavily on their personal credibility with children and with other teachers. They functioned very informally, with curriculum development and rules for behavior being tacit norms developed from precedent and dependent on the collective experience of the group--be it classroom or teacher group. This way of operating allowed them to orient their curricular style

toward what I have called "making connections" with life, with children's interests and with any serendipitous activity they might run into. At the same time, they were highly pragmatic and complied easily and without concern with the basic constraints or formal objectives of the public schools.

The NA Teachers

Curriculum as Human Relations

As indicated earlier, "human relations" was a slogan already in common usage in the school system. I use it to indicate the basic affiliation of the NA teachers with the traditional curriculum and curricular talk common among the majority of teachers in the school system. The descriptive reason for using the term is that relating more humanely or more openly to children provided the major impetus to the NA teachers for embarking on open education. The character of open education summarized by the slogan "curriculum as human relations" constituted a different interpretation of open education. However, the differences were never delineated or recognized except through the practical mechanism of teacher affiliation with like-minded teachers, and occasional complaints when some outsider equated the two groups of teachers.

Expressiveness and Creativity

The "human relations" teachers wanted to "get closer" to children. Open education for them represented a change in atmosphere in the classroom. The informality achieved through doing projects, bringing in comfortable furniture and sitting on the floor in a circle with children was important to them because it provided a warm atmosphere.

A primary thrust of the teachers' activity was to establish a situation in which children and teachers trusted each other and the children knew that their ideas were okay. This trust was critical because it established a relationship which allowed children to express emotion. This expressiveness was a primary objective of "creative teaching". It also provided something of a guide for curriculum building. A few teachers referred to psychological experiments about flexibility of thinking and promotion of creativity when they talked about why they used "junk" materials. These unstructured materials promoted the children's using their imaginations to put the materials to use.

The rationale underlying the notions of creativity and expressiveness was generally a psychological one, though it was not clear what, if any, theory was being drawn upon. Likewise, the talk about how to deal with disruptive children was derived from psychology, reflecting behavior modification and other psychological language. Most teachers spoke of having "time out" places for disruptive children to go.

Individualization

The NA teachers spoke of their curriculum as "individualized". That meant each child had his own lesson plan. Often each child had his or her own schedule or "contract". The child could move at his or her own pace through the curriculum. Unlike the OCC teachers who treated most texts as an unnecessary burden, these teachers generally accepted the texts and used them the way they understood their intended use. But they individualized the work, allowing them

to work with children on a one-to-one basis.*

The individualization of curriculum demanded some way both of keeping track of children's progress and of providing a place for each of the children to work. Contracts provided a way to keep track of progress. Learning stations, or learning centers, provided the physical arrangements for decentralization of the work. Learning stations which contained exercises to be done could be set up around the room. A child could go to a center when he or she was "ready" or when other children were not scheduled for that station.

In general, these teachers were most comfortable with projects which they designed and which had a beginning, a middle and an end. The serendipity the OCC teachers were so fond of was not so attractive to these teachers. It would appear that a program with a clear linear direction and a built-in progression was essential to the "human relations" perspective. The focus of these teachers was more on their ability to relate to children and less on helping children design their own projects. Furthermore, they felt the OCC imperative to spend many hours each day gathering materials to be an unnecessary burden added to the teaching day.

Change to Open Education

Unlike the OCC teachers, the NA teachers all mentioned a conversion of some sort to open education. They saw themselves as once

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*The OCC teachers often "resorted" to a text for their arithmetic curriculum. They then tried to supplement this with more "interesting" material and to "work math into other areas". The NA teachers were aware of the OCC teachers' disdain for reading "programs" and often apologized for being "hung up" on a reading program.

traditional teachers who had become uncomfortable with the constraints of traditional teaching. They had come to feel that schooling in the traditional way was unnecessarily dull and routine. They felt they could teach more humanely under the individualized style and get closer to the children they taught.

The Slogan System Analysis Extended

One cannot generalize from an interpretation since the subslogans still summarize practice rather than predict it. It should be clear that the subslogans are not even parallel. The categories in each interpretation are different, since they are designed to pick up the different emphases of the interpretation. However, the system of subslogans should reflect the coherence of each of the two perspectives so that one can fit compatible practice or compatible characterizations of classroom or professional activity with the appropriate interpretation. As an exercise in extending slogan systems, several answers to specific questions asked of teachers in interviews will be quoted. If the slogans have been adequately interpreted here, it should be obvious which statement is from a teacher who shares the perspective of the "connectors" and which from a teacher who shares the perspective of the "human relations" teachers.

The questions were asked in an interview. They were semi-structured. That is, the opening questions were standard, but the interviewer followed up topics raised with further questions. The responses quoted below are from six speakers. They will not be identified even by pseudonym, as the consistencies being noted are among perspectives, not speakers. The response to the standard questions is quoted rather

than the digressions. For the enjoyment of the reader, the exercise is set up as a multiple choice test. You are invited to fill in either HR for human relations or CN for connector beside each quote. Answers are at the end.

The questions to be quoted are few, due to space limitations. The first, which asks what goal they felt they have made progress on, was chosen because, presumably, the item identified is important to the teacher. The other two questions quoted are interesting because they are not directly about day-to-day details of teaching, but ask the teacher to project what she would do with extra time off from teaching and with an extra sum of money in her teaching budget.

I. Question: Of all the various goals that you have in mind as a teacher, which one or ones do you think you have made pretty good progress towards accomplishing this year?

_____ Answer 1. I think (we) both felt at the end of the year we knew our kids a lot better and are much closer to that goal than we had been in the multi-unit. We had a small group of kids and we did have a chance to interact with each child each day in some way or another. We felt close to the kids and had a closer understanding of their problems and their needs. And that's probably the biggest thing.

_____ Answer 2. (I feel best about) the children's being able to do some self-evaluation and realistic goal setting and feeling more comfortable with what they're doing.

II. Question: If you had extra time off in connection with teaching, what would you do?

_____ Answer 1. I'd probably...go through the materials I have and try to organize them. In other words, over the past 11 years, I've collected such a vast source...and I really have no idea what all I've got. I would just sort it out and see if I could arrange it into some coherent kind of thing. If kids need help with a certain thing, then I could draw out easily something that I've got.

_____ Answer 2. I think I would go for some training in psychology or behavioral disabilities, that kind of thing. It would help me understand the children's special needs.

III. Question: If you had an extra sum of money in your teaching budget, what would you do with it?

_____ Answer 1. If I were going to stay at the kindergarten level... There's this one school, which is out of state, that has spent thousands of dollars and they've fixed up units. They have a whole unit confined in a box--all the tapes and every material you'll need. They have all these shelves of units and interest centers. And then they just have, their room is just supposed to be fantastically run, all interest centers and everything. And it's so easy for them to change because whenever they're doing a unit, they pull out interest centers in units that match and they just set these things up and when they're done, they put them all back in the box.

_____ Answer 2. I guess I'd take a group of kids into a store, all kinds of places, and tell them to choose something of interest to them and make a list of what they would like to have to go with it. And then also use it for all kinds of trips on the bus, going all kinds of places. Oh, that would be fun! I would like to have about ten dollars a month just to take the buses, just to go anywhere. No destination, just see where the bus goes. Or say, "Hey, look at that place. Let's get off!"

Answers: I. A1. HR A2. CN

II. A1. CN A2. HR

III. A1. HR A2. CN

There were, of course, even more consistencies within individual interviews than between individuals. People do have coherent pedagogical styles as well as personal styles. What is remarkable is that two groups of teachers established these two interpretations, which are each understandable, but obviously constitute different interpretations of open education, with different imperatives for action. For the sake of harmony in the town where the field study was done, it would

have been better to have one interpretation. For the sake of exploring the notion of slogans, it is illustrative to have two interpretations arise in one social setting.

Educational discourse is slippery. But it is not "just jargon". It is the vehicle which allows people to propose and develop curriculum, and it is hoped, to engage in critiques of both proposals and practice. Continued empirical research in social settings should allow us to begin to understand educational discourse and the practice which it is about.

References

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